

Regular Session, 2010

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 20

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARTER, BOBBY BADON, HENRY BURNS, TIM BURNS, CARMODY, CHAMPAGNE, CONNICK, GISCLAIR, HARDY, HOFFMANN, KATZ, LABRUZZO, LIGI, NOWLIN, ROBIDEAUX, SIMON, SMILEY, WILLIAMS, AND WOOTON AND SENATORS APPEL, DONAHUE, DUPLESSIS, MARTINY, AND QUINN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to make certain changes to the minimum foundation program formula beginning with the minimum foundation program formula adopted for the 2010-2011 school year.

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 13(B) of the Constitution of Louisiana requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) annually to develop and adopt a formula which shall be used to determine the cost of a minimum foundation program (MFP) of education in all public elementary and secondary schools, as well as to allocate equitably the funds to city, parish, and other local public school systems; and

WHEREAS, local education agencies have traditionally been granted tremendous flexibility in using MFP funds to support public elementary and secondary education; and

WHEREAS, the legislature has appropriated additional funds to the state Department of Education to support increased student achievement, including initiatives aimed at improving literacy and numeracy, career and technical education, low-performing schools, and graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana continues to lag behind most of the nation in student achievement, as evidenced by a large percentage of students scoring below proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's current average school performance score is ninety-one out of two hundred, meaning that approximately thirty percent of students are performing below grade level; and

WHEREAS, around the country, public school systems have demonstrated that decentralized funding models have supported growth in student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Streamlining Government heard testimony and research about the benefits of student-based budgeting models in which a greater percentage of funds allocated to public elementary and secondary education is spent at the school level, funds are more equitably distributed based on the true needs of schools and students, and school leaders are empowered to utilize financial resources in a manner that best meets student needs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Streamlining Government's Recommendation Number 83 is "direct the Department of Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to pursue student-based budgeting"; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Streamlining Government's Recommendation Number 201 suggests that BESE "restructure the Minimum Foundation Program so that the MFP, as well as the federal dollars, follow the child and that eighty percent of the MFP funds are spent on the classroom as directed by the principal of each school"; and

WHEREAS, currently the MFP provides for mid-year funding adjustments to reflect increases in student enrollment but not decreases based on the loss of students; and

WHEREAS, the MFP should allocate funds to public elementary and secondary education based on accurate enrollment data to ensure equitable funding and appropriate use of taxpayer dollars; and

WHEREAS, a mid-year funding adjustment to the MFP for Fiscal Year 2010-2011 based on both increases and decreases of students would have resulted in approximately ten million dollars in savings to the state; and

WHEREAS, currently the state funds educational services for youth in the custody of the office of juvenile justice (OJJ) through an appropriation separate from the MFP, which results in duplicate payments for educational services for these students when funds do not "follow the child" to OJJ; and

WHEREAS, the Juvenile Justice Implementation Commission recommended that BESE include funding for educational services for students transferred to the custody of OJJ in the MFP in order to remedy these duplicative expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Streamlining Government's Recommendation Number 108 states that "school districts should work with the office of juvenile justice to forward local Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) funds to OJJ for students transferred

to state custody and are no longer in local schools, eliminating the 'double payment' for each student's education by the state and so that MFP dollars follow the student"; and

WHEREAS, only sixty-seven percent of Louisiana's high school students are graduating on time, as measured using an adjusted cohort graduation rate, a common formula for calculating states' high school graduation rates which was adopted by the governors of all fifty states in 2005 through the National Governors Association Graduation Counts Compact; and

WHEREAS, approximately sixteen thousand students drop out of school each year in Louisiana, which leads to significant, lifelong personal challenges for these youth as well as long-term economic and social challenges for the state; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have concluded that high school dropouts are one of the nation's costliest problems; and

WHEREAS, a study recently conducted by researchers at Northeastern University that used census and other government data, which tracks the employment, workplace, parenting, and criminal justice experiences of young high school dropouts, puts the collective cost to the nation over the working life of each high school dropout at two hundred ninety-two thousand dollars; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, BESE adopted a policy requiring each local school district to offer a pre-GED/Skills Options dropout prevention program, which has not served as an effective solution to Louisiana's dropout problem; only seven percent of program participants earned a General Education Diploma (GED) during the 2008-2009 school year; and

WHEREAS, more than seven thousand students are enrolled in pre-GED/Skills Options programs statewide; and

WHEREAS, Jobs for Louisiana's Graduates, modeled after the national Jobs for America's Graduates dropout prevention program, achieved a ninety-three percent graduation rate for 2008-2009; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Streamlining Government's Recommendation Number 212 is "require the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to terminate the pre-GED/Skills Options Program and direct local education agencies to redirect funds

supporting the program to approved dropout prevention programs modeled after Jobs for America's Graduates".

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, beginning with the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula adopted for the 2010-2011 school year, to make the appropriate changes to the MFP to:

(1) Implement a student-based budgeting model in which eighty percent of MFP funds must be used for instructional expenditures at the school level, and funds must be allocated to schools based on their enrollment and the characteristics of students that generate additional weighted funds.

(2) Include students in the custody of the office of juvenile justice in the MFP for the purpose of funding educational services and eliminating duplicate payments by the state.

(3) Phase out, by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the pre-GED/Skills Options program and require local education agencies to redirect MFP dollars currently supporting this program to dropout prevention programs modeled after Jobs for America's Graduates.

(4) Require that local school districts direct a portion of any increase in the MFP per pupil funding amount to dropout prevention.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE